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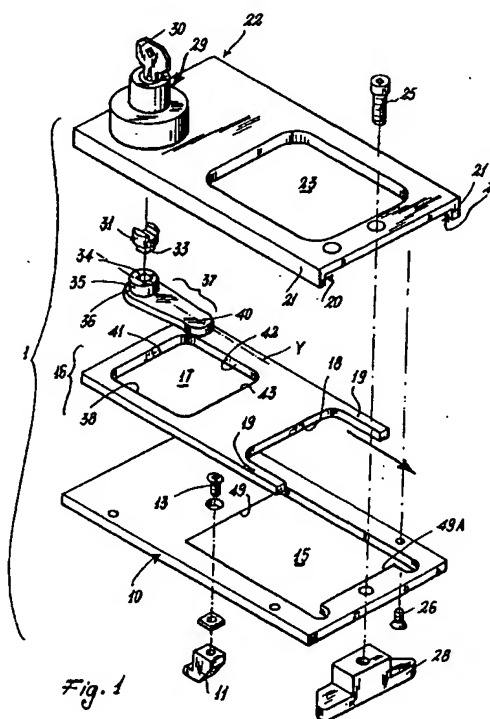
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I-20129 Milano (IT)(54) **Concealed mechanical antitheft device acting on a motor vehicle gear lever.**

(57) An antitheft device (1) acting on a motor vehicle gear lever (4) comprises means (16) movable relative to support means (10, 22) and arranged to cooperate with said gear lever (4), said means (16) comprising counteracting means (18) to be brought into contact with said gear lever (4) so as to prevent its movement when the antitheft device is engaged and consequently to prevent the use of the vehicle, said support means (10, 22) and the relative movable means (16) being arranged concealed within the usual gearshift protection part (3) positioned in the vehicle passenger compartment and from which the gear lever (4) projects. The movable means are a plate-like element (16) with a recessed end (18) arranged to lock the gear lever (4) in a plurality of positions corresponding to different gears, said element (16) comprising a polygonal hole (17) containing the actuator means (37), which are defined by an elongate element torsionally constrained to the lock (29).

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This invention relates to an antitheft device acting on a motor vehicle gear lever, said gear lever projecting from a usual gearshift protection part provided in the vehicle passenger compartment.

Various antitheft devices of the aforesaid type are known. In general, these devices comprise gearshift locking members which both when in their utilization position (antitheft device engaged) and when in their rest position (antitheft device disengaged) are visible within the passenger compartment, to the detriment of its appearance. Other known antitheft devices comprise removable bars which are fixed to the usual handbrake lever and cooperate with the gear lever to prevent its use.

These devices are generally laborious to mount and often laborious to use.

Other antitheft devices of the aforesaid type are known which are incorporated in a concealed manner within the gearshift protection part.

One of these devices is described in BE-A-898020; this document describes an antitheft device to be mounted to the side of the gear lever and comprising a part fixed to the frame and a part movable relative to this latter to come into contact with the gear lever to lock it in a working position (with a gear engaged). The fixed part acts as a guide for the movable part or member, which is acted upon by a lever mechanism operated by a key. The lever mechanism carries at its end a pin movable within a guide provided transversely within the movable member, said lever mechanism being positioned parallel to said member when not cooperating with the gear lever, and having its longitudinal axis inclined (by an angle less than 90°) to the longitudinal axis of said member when this latter cooperates with said gear lever to lock it.

The movable member is also provided at a rounded end with a seat in which the gear lever can sit when locked. This member is subjected to the action of a compression spring which tends to hold it still when cooperating with said gear lever, so locking it, and which opposes its release movement with a force exceeding that which can be exerted by the key. In this manner, said release is only possible by moving the movable member (by means of the key acting on the lever mechanism) and the gear lever simultaneously.

This known device has various drawbacks. Firstly, as it is positioned to the side of the gear lever it occupies a considerable space within the gearshift protection part. This prevents its use on automobiles in which this protection part is of small dimensions and where there is no space for positioning anything to the side of the gear lever.

In addition, the seat provided in the movable member is such as to enable the gear lever to be locked only when in certain particular positions (for

example corresponding to first or third gear or possibly only reverse). Consequently for advantageous and reliable use of the antitheft device, the vehicle on which it is mounted has to be parked only in particular positions so that its unauthorized use can be prevented. For example, if the antitheft device is able to lock the gear lever when in the reverse gear position, for the vehicle not to be able to be moved it has to be parked with its rear end facing an obstacle (such as a wall).

Hence this Belgian device is hardly practical.

In addition, because the lever mechanism which moves the movable member is inclined to the axis of said member when this latter cooperates with the gear lever, by acting forcibly on the gear lever it is possible to move said member and release the gear lever. In this manner, if the gear lever is locked for example in the position corresponding to first gear, it can be released and shifted into neutral to enable the vehicle to be moved (for example removed from the obstacle in front of which it was parked). The gear lever can then be shifted into the position corresponding to first gear and the vehicle can be driven away.

In addition, this device is of considerable size and complicated construction. Finally, it is complicated to release the antitheft device, requiring manipulation both of the gear lever and of the key used to operate the lever mechanism which moves the movable member. This manipulation of the gear lever can lead with time to breakage of the pin by which movement is transmitted from the lever mechanism to the movable member.

Another device of the stated type is presented in WO-A-8804246, which describes an antitheft device acting on the gear lever and comprising two movable elements which close together about the gear lever, to lock it. This device has only one gear lever locking position, so limiting its reliable use. In addition, this device is of relatively large dimensions so preventing its universal use on any type of vehicle. Moreover the device is of complicated construction.

An object of the invention is to provide an antitheft device acting on the gear lever which overcomes the drawbacks of known devices.

A particular object of the present invention is to provide an antitheft device which is simple to mount on the vehicle, is easy to use and occupies a very small space within the gearshift protection part, hence allowing it to be used on any type of vehicle.

A further object is to provide an antitheft device of the aforesaid type, of which both the time and cost of its construction and mounting are very low and which offers considerable reliability in use.

A further object is to provide an antitheft device of the aforesaid type, the mounting of which does

not require mechanical work on the gearbox or on the members connected to it.

These and further objects which will be apparent to the expert of the art are attained by an antitheft device in accordance with the characteristics both of the independent claim and of those associated therewith.

The present invention will be more apparent from the accompanying drawing, which is provided by way of non-limiting example and in which:

Figure 1 is an exploded view of one embodiment of the antitheft device according to the invention;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the antitheft device of Figure 1 shown in its position of utilization, some parts being shown in section for greater clarity;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of a modification of the antitheft device of Figure 1; and

Figure 4 is an exploded view of a further embodiment of the invention, and in which parts corresponding to those of the preceding figures are indicated by the same reference numerals.

With reference to Figures 1 and 2, the antitheft device of the invention is indicated overall by 1. It is arranged to be positioned concealed within the usual gearshift protection part 3 of the vehicle present in its passenger compartment (wherever this part is positioned within the vehicle, ie on its floor or on its steering wheel). The antitheft device is arranged to cooperate with a usual gear lever 4 comprising an operating shaft 5 projecting from said part 3 and partially covered by a protection bellows 6.

The antitheft device 1 comprises a base part or plate 10 connected (by a screw 13) to a substantially hook-shaped element 11 for its initial removable fixing within a compartment 12 of said part 3. The hook-shaped element hooks to a usual bracket (not shown) present in said compartment 12.

The plate 10 also comprises a substantially square hole 15.

An element or slider 16 comprising a (substantially square) through hole 17 and an end 18 with a large recess bounded by lateral projections 19 is movable on the plate 10. The slider 16 slides within guides 20 defined by the plate 10 and by sides 21 of an upper closure or plate element 22 also provided with a through hole 23. The element 22 is connected to the (lower) plate 10 by screws 25 and 26, the screw 25 cooperating with a block 28 fixedly inserted into the compartment 12 in any known manner.

With the plate 22 there is associated a usual lock 29 operated by a key 30, said lock being preferably of known anti-tamper type.

With the lock 29 there is associated an element 31 (which alternatively can be a part of said lock)

comprising a polygonal protuberance 33 arranged to cooperate with a corresponding seat 34 in a bush 35 positioned at the end 36 of an elongate element (or lever) 37 located in proximity to (and preferably in contact with) a side 38 bounding the hole 17 in the slider 16 and within this latter. The lever 37 has a thickness equal to the depth of the hole 17 (and consequently projects neither above nor below it) and is able to move within said hole, but always remaining adjacent to said side 38. The lever 37 has a rounded free end 40 which cooperates with two (41 and 43) of the remaining sides 41, 42 and 43 defining the hole 17, to move it between the plates 10 and 22.

Finally, the holes 15 and 23 are arranged superposed to receive the shaft 5 of the gear lever 4, said holes being sufficiently large to allow normal movement of said gear lever during vehicle driving.

It will be assumed that the aforescribed antitheft device is to be used.

During vehicle movement the gear lever 4 can move freely within the superposed holes 15 and 23. In this situation the end 18 of the slider 16 is maintained in correspondence with a side 49 (Figure 1) of the hole 15 so as to allow movement of the gear lever 4. At the same time the lever 37 is positioned parallel to the side 38 of the hole 17 in the slider 16, with its end 40 facing the side 41 of said hole.

When the antitheft device is to be engaged, the gear lever 4 is moved into a suitable position (such as reverse - R - as indicated in Figure 2). This position (reverse or a forward gear) is chosen in accordance with the position of any obstacle in front of which the vehicle is positioned. It should be noted that the large width of the end 18 enables the gear lever 4 to be positioned in any of said positions depending on the position of the vehicle with respect to the obstacle. In other words the gear lever 4 can be positioned at choice in reverse gear or in first, third or fifth gear (or in reverse gear or in second or fourth gear depending on the vehicle model) because of the fact that the gear lever can in all cases cooperate with the recess 18 which locks it (as described hereinafter).

The key 30 is then rotated to obtain corresponding movement (by the cooperation between the protuberance 33 of the element 31 and the bush 35) of the lever 37 within the hole 17. As a result of this movement, the lever end 40 is brought into cooperation with the side 43 of the hole 17 to hence urge the slider 16 to slide within the guide 20. The slider moves in the direction of the arrow F of Figure 1 until its end 18 comes into contact with the gear lever 4 (preferably positioned, as stated, in a suitable manner on the basis of any obstacle in proximity to which the vehicle is par-

ked). On reaching its end of travel, the lever 37 assumes the position shown in Figure 2 and by pushing against the side 43 maintains the slider 16 bearing against the gear lever 4. At the same time it opposes and prevents any forced movement of the lever 4 (in the illustrated example, locked against the side 49A of the hole 15), so maintaining it in the stated reverse position R. It should be noted that this lever becomes positioned parallel to the direction of the movement undergone by the gear lever 4 in passing from first to second gear or from third to fourth gear. Consequently, no attempt to force the release of the device by pushing the lever against the slider 16 can produce any result, because the force acting on the lever 37 is parallel to its longitudinal axis Y. In addition, because of the manner in which the lock 29 is coupled to the lever 37, any thrust exerted on the slider 16 by the gear lever 4 in attempting to release the antitheft device is exerted in a direction passing through and perpendicular to the protuberance 33 (which lies on the axis Y) and hence cannot result in any rotation of the lock 29. In addition, because of said perpendicular arrangement and of the position of the lever 37 within the hole 17 in the slider 16, the lock 29 does not feel the said thrust and is therefore not subjected to any possibility of breakage or damage.

In addition, even if it is sought to move the gear lever 4 laterally within the holes 15 and 23 and within the recessed end 18 in contact with the gear lever, no movement of the slider 16 can be achieved as it is locked in position (acting against the gear lever 4) by the lever 37.

To deactivate the antitheft device, the reverse of the aforesaid procedure is adopted by moving the lever 37 in the direction of the arrow W of Figure 2 to hence separate the slider from the lever 4 (in a manner analogous to that described and by the action of the lever 37 on the side 41 bounding the hole 17 in this latter).

The antitheft device is of simple and reliable use. In addition it can be easily mounted in a concealed manner within the compartment 12 of the part 3 of any vehicle because the antitheft device is of small dimensions and contains the gear lever. This mounting is effected by separating the usual upper closure portion 3A of the part 3 from its lower portion 3B in any known manner. In addition, this mounting requires no work to be done on the gearbox members, and hence in no way disturbs its mechanical integrity.

Figure 3 shows a modified embodiment of the invention. This figure (in which parts corresponding to those already described are indicated by the same reference numerals) shows a slider 16 provided laterally with a recess 16A arranged to cooperate with the mechanical contactor 60 of a micro-

switch 61 associated with the antitheft device 1 in known manner. The microswitch 61 is housed in a seat 65 provided in the side of the plate 22 and is connected by usual electrical connections 70 and 71 to the vehicle electrical supply and to an indicator lamp 72 indicating when the antitheft device is activated; the microswitch can also be connected to an acoustic indicator 73 (possibly connected to a usual tampering sensor, not shown) which is activated following unauthorized access to the vehicle, at the same time the antitheft device remaining activated for a time exceeding a predetermined value (for example 30 seconds).

On activating the antitheft device 1, the contactor 60 becomes positioned in the recess 16A and activates the indicator lamp 72 (LED) while setting the acoustic indicator 73 ready for activation. On deactivating the antitheft device 1, this contactor is urged by the slider towards the microswitch, which hence deactivates the indicators 71 and 72.

Figure 4 shows a further embodiment of the invention. In this the slider 16 comprises through holes 160 and 161 which, when the antitheft device is disengaged (slider not cooperating with the gear lever), lie coaxial to holes 170 and 171 carrying screws 172 (only one is shown) for fixing the plate 10 to a bracket 173 inserted (for example fixed) into the compartment 12 of the gearshift protection part. The screw 25 is covered by a plate 175 kept in place by a usual socket head screw 176 (or the like) positioned in a hole 177 in the element 22. Hence with the antitheft device engaged, the screws 172 are inaccessible and the gear lever, maintained against an edge 180 of the element 22, prevents withdrawal of the plate 175 from the guides 20 via the hole 23 (in which the plate 175 is retained towards a free edge 22B of the element 20, where a cavity 22C is present, by screws 190 associated with the plate 10) in this element. Consequently with the antitheft device engaged it is not possible to remove it from the compartment 12 in the gearshift protection part. Preferably, the slider 16 comprises small balls 160A and 160B which become positioned in correspondence with the screws 172 when the antitheft device is engaged. This prevents access to the screws 172.

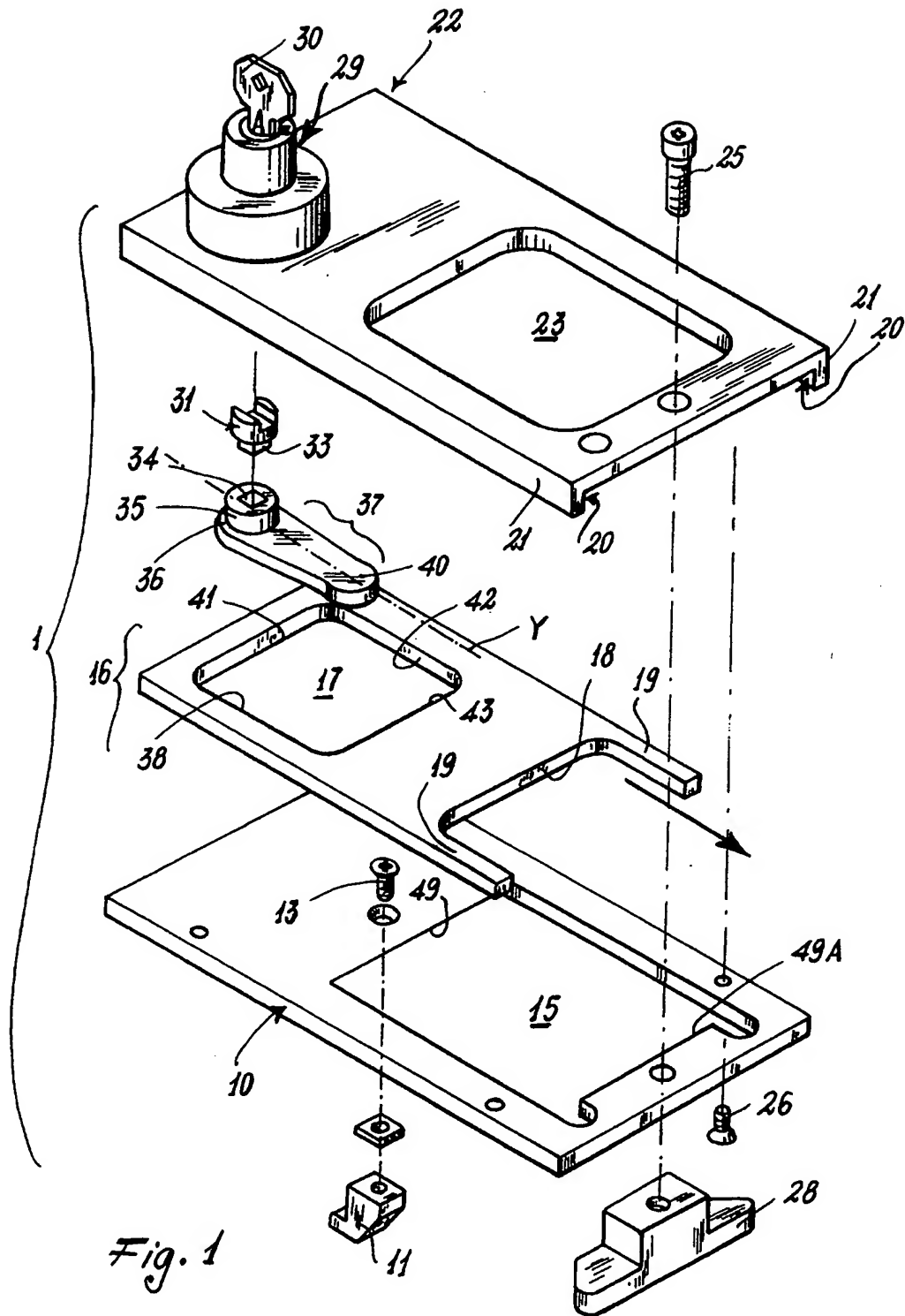
In contrast, with the antitheft device disengaged the screws 172 can be removed from the bracket 173, and by removing the socket head screw 176 the plate 175 can be withdrawn from the guides 20, to allow the screw 25 to be removed from the block 28. In this manner the antitheft device can be removed from the compartment 12, which is advantageous for working on the gearshift components contained in the part 3.

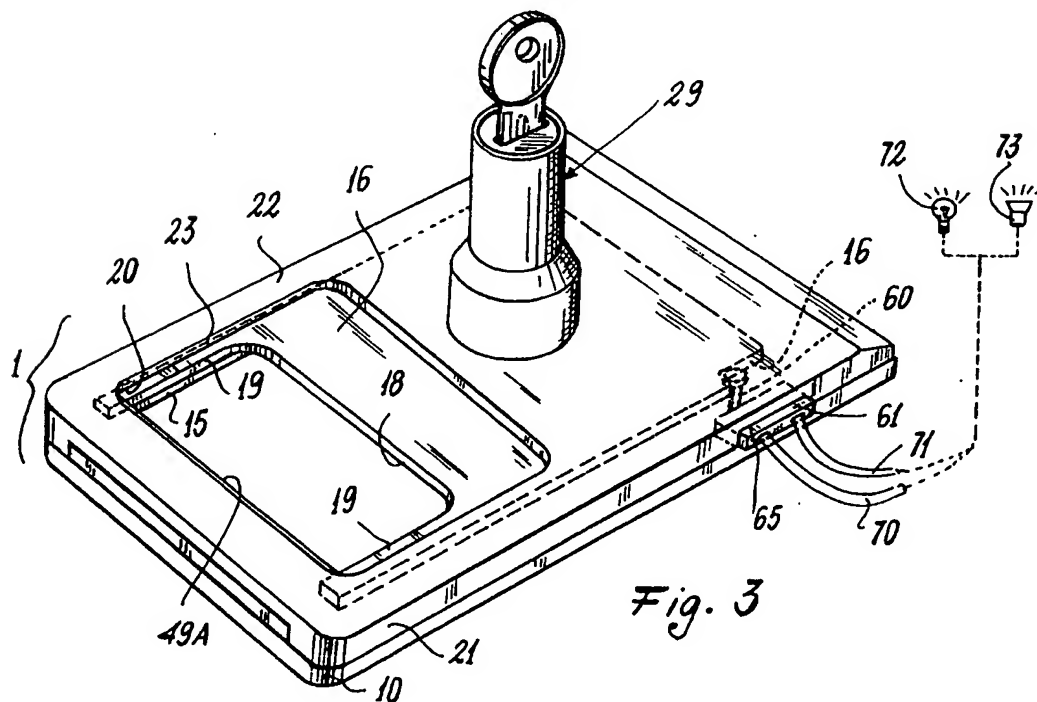
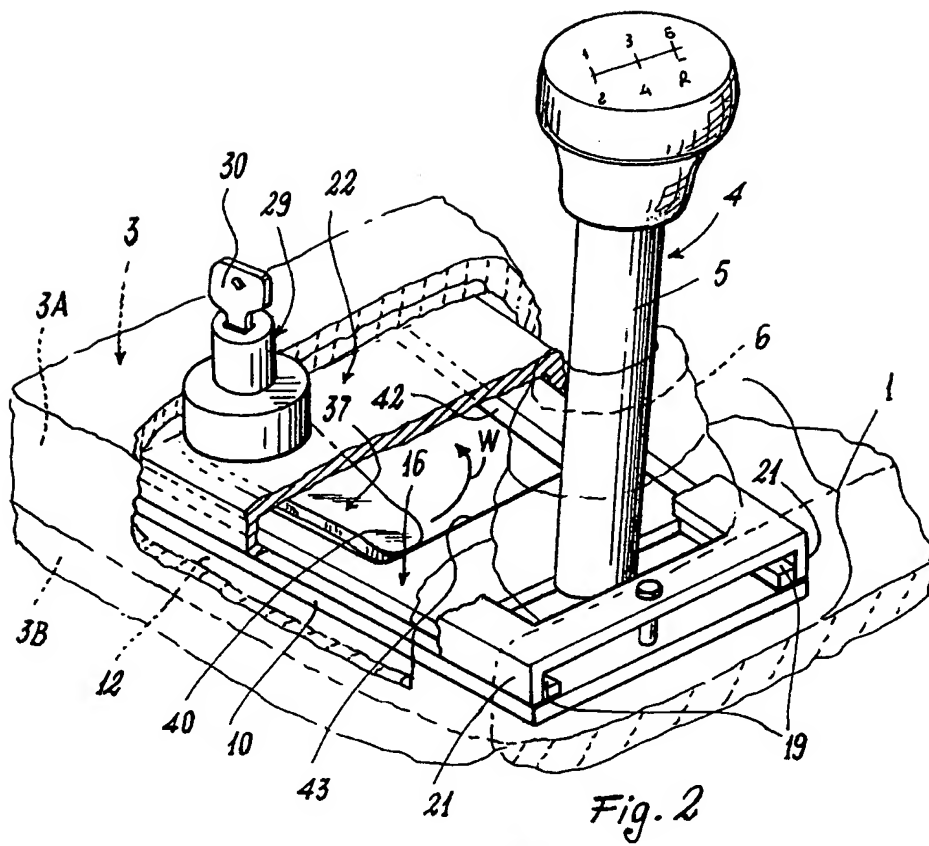
Various embodiments of the invention have been described. Other embodiments are possible in the light of the foregoing description which is

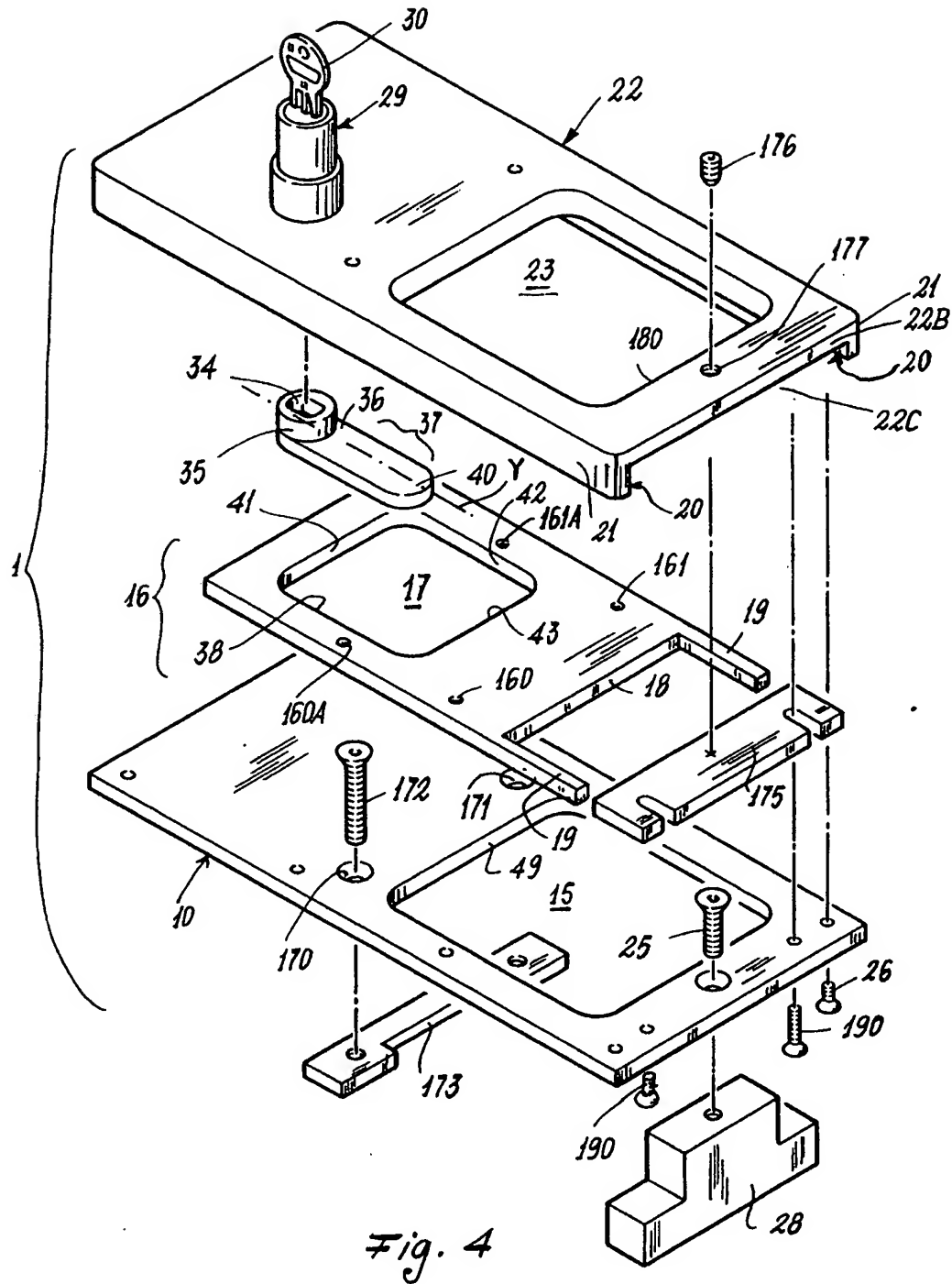
given by way of example only, these therefore falling within the scope of the present document. Embodiments applied to a manual gearbox have been described in which the slider 16 cooperates directly with the gear lever 4. Alternatively, in automatic transmissions, this slider cooperates directly with a usual mechanical member operationally associated with the lever 4, said cooperation allowing indirect locking of said lever, making it impossible to use the vehicle. Such an embodiment also falls within the scope of the present invention.

Claims

1. An antitheft device acting on a motor vehicle gear lever, said gear lever projecting from a usual gearshift protection part positioned in the vehicle passenger compartment, comprising means (16) movable relative to support means (10, 22) and arranged to cooperate operationally with said gear lever (4), said movable means (16) comprising counteracting means (18) arranged to cooperate operationally with said gear lever (4) to prevent its movement when the antitheft device is engaged and consequently to prevent use of the vehicle, said support means (10, 22) and the relative movable means (16) being positioned in a concealed manner within the gearshift protection part (3) between a usual removable upper closure portion (3A) thereof and a known lower part (3B), said movable means being operated by actuator means (37) controlled by a lock (29), characterised in that the movable means are a plate-like element (16) with one end (18) acting as counteracting means, said plate-like element (16) comprising a polygonal hole (17) containing the actuator means (37), these latter being an elongate element contained within said hole (17) and torsionally constrained at one of its ends (36) to the lock (29), said element (37) being positioned parallel to the sides (38, 42) of said hole in the direction of movement of the gear lever (4) when the antitheft device is engaged, said gear lever (4) being contained within the antitheft device and being free to move therein when this latter is deactivated.
2. An antitheft device as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the plate-like element (16) moves along guides (20) defined between an upper element (22) and an associated lower element (10), said upper and lower elements (10, 22) defining the support means for the movable means.
3. An antitheft device as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the elongate element (37) positioned within the hole (17) in the movable means comprises a free end (40) arranged to cooperate with at least two sides (41, 43) bounding said hole (17).
4. An antitheft device as claimed in claim 1, characterised by comprising means (11) for its hooking, and means (28) for its fixing, to the part (3) containing the gearshift system.
5. An antitheft device as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that that end (18) of the plate-like element (16) acting as counteracting means operates directly on the gear lever (4) and is of large width so as to cooperate with said gear lever (4) in any one of a plurality of positions corresponding to the selection of different gears.
6. An antitheft device as claimed in claim 5, characterised in that the end (18) of the plate-like element is recessed.
7. An antitheft device as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the end (18) of the plate-like element (16) cooperates, in particular in an automatic transmission, with a usual mechanical member operationally connected to the gear lever (4) in order to indirectly lock this latter.
8. An antitheft device as claimed in claim 1, characterised by comprising lamp indicator means (72) to indicate its activation, said indicator means (72) being controlled by a microswitch (61) comprising a mechanical contactor (60) cooperating with the movable means (16).
9. An antitheft device as claimed in claim 8, characterised by comprising acoustic indicator means (73) connected to the microswitch (61) to operate in the case of unauthorized access to the vehicle on which the antitheft device is mounted.









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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 94 11 1831

| DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Category | Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages | Relevant to claim | CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6) |
| D,X | BE-A-898 020 (FLEURY) * page 6, line 11 - line 18 * ---- | 1,2,4 | B60R25/00 |
| P,A | WO-A-94 04397 (KIBBLE) * figure 12 * ---- | 5,6 | |
| D,A | WO-A-88 04246 (GILFOYLE) ---- | | |
| A | DE-B-11 86 762 (PELZ) ----- | | |
| | | | TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6) |
| | | | B60R |
| The present search report has been drawn up for all claims | | | |
| Place of search THE HAGUE | | Date of completion of the search 5 December 1994 | Examiner KNOPS, J |
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